

Reflections

by Leonard Jordan, State Conservationist

In the fall of the year, temperatures start to drop, farmers harvest their last crops of the season, and our minds turn to thoughts of spending the holidays feasting with our family and friends. It is the season of cheer and goodwill.

In the workplace, the fiscal year ends and we reflect on our successes and accomplishments and begin mapping out a strategy for the coming year. We set agency goals through a business plan and personal goals through a career plan. It is a time for renewal and re-dedication to the spirit and business of conservation.

Our chief has outlined the priorities for the agency and those priorities are echoed in the statewide business plan. Recognizing that half of our workforce will be eligible to retire in the next 4 years, a major initiative has been launched to ensure that those



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HAPPY
HOLIDAYS



FOCUS ON THE FIELD

NRCS Helps Protect City Water Supply

*By Sam Sharpe, District
Conservationist*



Haralson County native Bill White has lived his whole life on a farm. "I have spent all of my 77 years on a farm and been involved in

"We only have one time around on this earth and there is only one world so we cannot afford to waste either. As my father said: If you leave it, leave it like you found it."--Bill White, Haralson County farmer standing next to his new Roof Runoff Management Practice

farming since I was old enough to milk a cow," he said.

Concentration of livestock around White's feed barn resulted in erosion and nutrient runoff to an adjacent creek--upstream of the city of Bremen's water supply reservoir.

Concentrated runoff from the roof of the barn across

the bare areas resulted in accelerated erosion.

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After learning about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) at a local FSA office, White contacted District Conservationist Sam Sharpe.

Sharpe recommended Heavy Use Area Protection to stabilize the traffic areas around the barn.

Roof runoff management was also recommended to collect the flow from the roof and transport it to a stable outlet. EQIP was used to assist the landowner with installation of the conservation practices.

“Mr. White...will be a role model for others in this area,” said Carl Brack, Georgia Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisor.

“Anything worth doing is worth doing right,” said White, the last surviving male in his family. Both of his brothers were involved in farming.

White said he liked the EQIP program because: “It provides funding to farmers that might not otherwise have the funds or incentive to install conservation practices on their own.

“We only have one time around on this earth and there is only one world so we can not afford to waste

either. As my father said, If you leave it, leave it like you found it.”

Editor’s Note: Sharpe’s brother is a DC in Highlands County, Florida.

His father and younger brother were recognized as Outstanding Conservation Farmers in Florida in 1988 and were among 10 National Finalists in the National Endowment for Soil and Water Conservation program in 1988

Bill White’s HUA



Bill White and Jennifer Odom, Soil Conservation Technician, walking under the Roof Runoff gutter system

Carl Brack, Georgia Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisor



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who remain are ready to step into positions of leadership and help orient and train new employees entering the workforce.

As an agency, we must look outward and ahead and try to foresee what the major resource issues will be and the skills needed in NRCS to address those needs.

As individuals, we must look inward and renew our commitment to conservation and to ourselves. We must strive to be the best that we can be. We must evaluate our skills and take steps to strengthen our weakest areas.

I encourage all employees to take some time over this holiday season to reflect on personal career goals. Take steps now to prepare yourself for the position you want in the year 2006. It will be here before you know it.

Happy holidays to each and every one of you from my family to yours.

“The important thing is this: that we should be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.”--
Charles DuBos

USDA's Hawks to Speak at GACDS Annual Meeting

Bill Hawks, Under Secretary of Marketing and Regulatory Programs for the USDA, will speak on the new farm bill at the GACDS Annual Meeting in Savannah Jan.3-5.

Conservation received record increases in funding in the new farm bill.

The Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors (GACDS) Annual Meeting, to be held at the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort & Spa, will address several issues affecting natural resources and their future implications in Georgia and beyond.

Conservation District Supervisors and others deeply involved in the preservation of our natural resources will convene at the luxurious waterfront resort for three days of meetings, workshops and seminars.

For the first time, attendees may register online for the annual meeting at www.gacds.org.

The registration deadline is December 16th. Attendees should contact the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort & Spa (912-201-2090) for room reservations.

For more information concerning the GACDS Annual Meeting or other GACDS programs and events, please contact

**David Bennett or Mary Simmons
(706) 542-3065
or visit the GACDS website**





“Leading Change” The Leader in You satellite seminar

By Barbara Wallace

Competitive outsourcing, technical service providers and aging of the Federal work force are all current issues in the media and within government.

The Merit Systems Protection Board, for example, says that seventy percent of the Senior Executive Service will become eligible to retire during the next five years. These issues will provide both change and opportunity.

Government employees and their partners will need to acknowledge and adapt to upcoming change while continuing to meet customer needs. In the December 10 The Leader in You satellite seminar, “Leading Change,” Harvard professor John Kotter will emphasize that change can easily be recognized, but the reality of creating that change is extremely difficult.

In this training, you will learn to recognize how leadership relates to change and how it must differentiate itself from management. Furthermore, Kotter will explain various techniques and tips for leading change and identify the critical elements of leadership. This seminar is available as a satellite broadcast on Tuesday, December 10 from 11:00

a.m. to 1:00 p.m. ET. Coordinates and handouts for the broadcast will soon be available.

For more information, contact Barbara Wallace at

barbara.wallace@usda.gov or at

(616) 942-1503. Or, contact Sue Brooks at sbrooks@ftw.nrcs.usda.gov or (817) 509-3245.

2003 Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season

The 2003 FEHB open season is being held from **November 11 through December 9, 2002**, for eligible employees.

This notice announces and provides guidance about the 2003 FEHB open season.

Any eligible employee who is not currently registered may enroll.

Enrollees may do any of the following:

- Change from one plan or option to another

- Change from self only to self and family or from family to self only

- Make any combination of these changes

- Waive participation in premium conversion (or elect to participate, if previously waived)

Premium Conversion

This benefit provides the employee pre-tax payment of FEHB contributions; i.e., your health benefits (like your TSP contributions) are deducted from your gross bi-weekly pay and then you pay taxes on the remaining salary.

The alternative is to receive your normal salary and make FEHB contributions after tax. Your enrollment was automatic unless you submitted a waiver request.

If you are participating in premium conversion, you will be allowed to drop FEHB coverage, or change to self-only coverage only if you have a “qualifying life event” (QLE), such as when you get married or your spouse gets a job that covers you under your spouse’s health insurance. NOTE: If you do not have a QLE, you will be allowed to drop coverage or change to self-only ONLY during Open Season.

Please view Premium Conversion website for more details:

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/pretaxfehb>.

Use Internet Explorer to view everything in this site.

“Longleaf Pine Field Day is a Big Success”

by Sheri Teems

The Rome Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office and the Rolling Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council office organized an educational field day at Dr. James M. Ware’s farm in north Floyd County to increase awareness about the benefits of Longleaf pine and to encourage Longleaf re-establishment in Northwest Georgia.

The Coosa River Soil and Water Conservation District and Georgia Forestry Commission sponsored the event.

Local farmer and Coosa River district supervisor, Thad Rush welcomed everyone to the field day, which took place on the site where Dr.

Ware has planted approximately 90 acres of Longleaf pine with NRCS assistance.

The trees were planted in a cut over area that was harvested for timber several years ago. The Longleaf pine is a native tree to Floyd County. Longleaf pine communities have more biodiversity than any other forest habitat except the tropics but their numbers have declined dramatically over the years due to land clearing for agriculture and development and do to the replacement of harvested timber stands with the faster growing Loblolly pine.

There is an ongoing NRCS initiative to encourage re-establishment of Longleaf

in Georgia because of its many desirable characteristics.

Longleaf yields a higher proportion of pole and piling material that other southern pine and with management the under story conditions can be maintained longer which benefits many wildlife species, making Longleaf more adaptable to multi-use management for wildlife, timber and aesthetics.



Approximately 60

people participated in the field day that included speakers from NRCS, Coosa Forestry Services, Georgia Forestry Commission, DNR-Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Land Trust and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Coosa River SWCD and Coosa Forestry Services sponsored lunch for all the participants. Future field days may be held at Dr. Ware’s farm as the trees mature.



December

- 2-5
NOPBNRCSE Training Conference
The Organization will host its 10th Annual Training Conference from December 2-5, 2002 in Arlington, Texas. The theme for this year's training conference is Building Our Future Through Educational Opportunities... Tomorrow is Now.
- 10
Statewide Forage Conference
9:30 a.m., UGA Livestock Arena, Athens
- 17
Small and Limited Resource Farmers Workshop
Macon @ Ocmulgee Indians National Monument



December 2002

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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
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Southern Ridge and Valley MLRA Office Established

By Edward Ealy

The Calhoun soil survey office relocated to Cartersville, GA on November 4, 2004.

The soil survey staff conducted the Gordon County soil survey update from Calhoun, GA location.

The new office location in Cartersville is established to provide a permanent office to complete the initial soil surveys, updates, and maintenance projects in MLRA 128 and 129 (Southern Appalachian Ridge and Valley and Sand Mountain).

Initially, this office will have three soil scientists.

After the Fulton County Soil Survey update is completed, a fourth soil scientist will be added to this staff.

The concept of the MLRA or "Super" Soil Survey Project office is a continuation of the Soil Survey Reorganization of 1994. There are several reasons for this concept in soil survey field activities:

- * The 1985 and subsequent "Farm Bills" need consistent, seamless soil data.
- * Demand for multi-county, multi-state survey information has increased.
- * NASIS implementation allows for soil survey management by geographic area.
- * SSURGO digitizing project initiated.
- * Thirty-five percent of Georgia's published soil surveys (40% nationwide) needs updating to meet today's needs.
- * The demand to update surveys equals or exceeds the demand for initial inventory.
- * The inconsistencies between independent county level soil surveys limit their usefulness.
- * A diversity of soil survey products is demanded.

Plans are to establish other MLRA offices in Georgia as we complete the initial soil inventory and soil scientists become available to staff these offices.

Other MLRA Soil Survey Offices are tentative for Athens, GA

(MLRA 136), Fort Valley (MLRA 135, 137), (Tifton MLRA 133A) and Waycross, (MLRA 153 A&B)

Long-range plans are to work with MLRA offices in adjoining states to provide updates and maintenance along state lines and MLRA 130 (Blue Ridge) in Georgia.

The objective of the MLRA office concept is:

- * To update surveys where needed
- * To improve the quality of the data
- * To provide seamless digital products
- * To improve understanding of soil-landscape functions
- * To maintain the data, not letting it become obsolete
- * More efficient (fewer people and offices)
- * Increased stability to the lives of our staff
- * To have a soil survey staff in place to conduct soil survey activities in all areas of the state without having to move soil scientist every five years.

Tips for Selecting and Caring for Fresh Christmas Trees

from Georgia Christmas Tree Association

- * Determine where in your home you will display your tree so that you will be able to tell what size and shape you need.
- * Do a freshness test. Hold a branch about 6 inches from the tip. Pull your hand toward the tip, allowing the branch to slip through your fingers. Very few green needles should come off in your hand if the tree is fresh.
- * Real trees need water. Make a fresh cut across the base of the trunk, 1/4 inch up from the original cut. This breaks the seal caused by the original cut and allows the tree to take up water.
- * Keep your tree outdoors in a bucket of water the first 24 hours and then add two pints to a gallon of water a day thereafter.



Farmers Allow Us All to Choose

By Mike Isbell

University of Georgia GA FACES

If you're a "Baby Boomer" or younger, you weren't around in the "old days" when people's lives were structured around putting food on the table.

But my father was.

Even though his father had a small general store in mountains of north Georgia, if they were going to have food on the table, they still had to raise it or grow it.

My father always enjoyed telling the story of the day my grandfather called on Mr. Ewing to slaughter their hog. Mr. Ewing might not have enjoyed telling the story as much as my dad did.

The hog was kept in a slightly slanting-floored pen with a sloping tin roof. Mr. Ewing carefully centered the sights of his 22-caliber rifle on the center of the hog's forehead to kill it quickly.

And he fired.

But the bullet ricocheted off the hog's head, hit the sloping metal roof, ricocheted off it, and hit Mr. Ewing in the center of his forehead, knocking him to the ground!

The hog wasn't bothered very much, but Mr. Ewing wound up with a very big knot on his head.



Now just think for a moment. If it weren't for our farmers, just about all of us would have stories to tell our kids about hog killing and having to work in the fields. And we might be telling them that when we weren't working in the fields, we were preparing the next meal or preserving food for the winter.

As modern technology changed agriculture, farmers became more efficient. A hundred years ago, one farmer could feed only five other people. So folks had to grow their own food. That's the reason my grandfather did.

Today's farmer feeds about 128 people. That allows the rest of us to choose the lifestyle we live without worrying about having to grow food to put on our table.

We can be doctors and lawyers, teachers and ballplayers, factory workers and carpenters — even county agents. We can be those things because our farmers feed us.

About 98 percent of us are liberated from working the soil, and that makes it easy to forget how dependent we are on our farmers for food.

It's important for every American to know how very lucky we are to have the best farmers in the world working hard to grow and deliver the best food in the world to us every day.

So this Thanksgiving Week, enjoy your food. And appreciate all those who made it possible: our farmers.

Maximizing Field Service Center Phone Messaging Service

By Cheryl Jenkins

Did you know it is possible to record an additional informational message on the existing automated attendant. Current options have the called select 2 for FSA, 3 for NRCS, and 4 for Rural Development.



Each office has the ability to customize and program additional numbers as well. For example, you can program a message to "Select 7 to hear the latest farm bill news."

Messages can be 60 to 120 seconds in length and can be changed daily or as often as needed. Local field offices who want to use this helpful communication tool must call the NRCS Helpdesk at 970-295-5400, to make this feature active. There is no charge for this feature.

Georgia Urban Forest Conference

By Steve Leslie

This conference was attended by about 200 generally passionate, bright, knowledgeable people from all over Georgia.

It was a refreshing break to have two days of sessions and tours.

The conference kicked off Wednesday afternoon with a panel discussion between a developer, a regulator, a citizen planner and the audience.

Rich Porter of Richport Properties, the developer, said that environmental regulations had increased by many (8?) times since 1960, and that development regulations need to be performance oriented rather than prescriptive in order to give developers the room to be creative.

Lucy Rowland, citizen planner in Athens, said that "Sprawl costs us all.", and that a minimum of 12 units per acre is needed for public transportation to work effectively.

Larry Kaiser talked about some of the ways that they are reducing impervious cover and increasing tree cover in Rockdale County such as using tree planted islands in residential streets.

Thursday morning was concurrent breakout sessions.

The first that I attended was titled "Urban and Community Forestry".

Heather Leo with Gwinnett Clean and Beautiful talked about the Neighborwoods program out of Austin, Texas.

showed NASA satellite photos of urban heat islands developing in Gwinnett and talked about organizing street tree plantings as a way to cool them.

She also said that Gwinnett has spent the most on green space of any county in GA.

Connie Head of Athens-Clarke County talked about the requirements of trees such as a radius of 1.5 feet of root area protected during construction per inch diameter at breast height (dbh).

Her manual on urban/suburban tree care is available free by writing to forester@co.clarke.ga.us.

The session on greenspace featured our very own Cindy Haygood.

She pointed out that Georgia ranks third in the nation in farmland conversion to nonagricultural uses.

She also said that farmland costs only 37 cents in services per dollar generated in tax revenue including conservation tax use because "cows don't go to school".

By comparison residential areas cost \$1.15 per dollar generated.

There will be an informational session on the Farmland Protection Program in Gwinnett on December 9th

Another speaker pointed out that Atlanta has gone from a diameter of 60 miles in 1973 to 110 miles in 1998 which makes it the fastest expanding human settlement in history.

He is promoting the use of transferable development rights for all of Georgia, which apparently only

the combined cities and counties can easily use now.

The forester for Rockdale, Ray Probart, is researching the best tree ordinances in Georgia and recommends the one in Dawson County if one of your localities needs a model.

Thursday afternoon was for tours. My group went to the Fernbank forest, a rare 70-acre expanse of virgin Piedmont forest just five miles from downtown Atlanta with trees up to 3' dbh and 120' tall.

The forest is used by Dekalb County for education and research.

Next we went to Hahn Woods at Emory University which is using Remedy to spray English Ivy and other exotics.

Finally we visited the Olmstead designed linear park on Ponce de Leon Avenue, which was the landscape designer's last residential project and one of only two of his in the South, with Biltmore in North Carolina being the other.

Friday morning was a panel discussion on how to get your message out in the media.

Patti Bond with the Atlanta Journal recommended calling to find out the writers and editors who have an interest in your topic.

Another tactic is to respond to writers of negative articles with your own view.

Also, include hard facts in your information for a news feature to make it more educational.

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If your paper prints a list of meetings, call the numbers listed to speak with the program chairs for those groups to get on their programs to get your message out.

The next speaker was Kevin Johnson with the Trust for Public Lands, which is an offshoot of the Nature Conservancy.

He talked about the Chattahoochee greenway system from above Helen to below Columbus that has cost over \$150 million in both private and public funds.

He said, "There are no great cities without great parks."

In particular he mentioned the partial purchase of the J.C. Hyde farm which Mr. Hyde claims has run-

ning water. He says he has to "run to the well and back" (groan).

Mr. Johnson also pointed out that the most valued amenity for home buyers is walking trails.

The last speaker was 6th District Congressman Johnny Isakson.

Mr. Isakson is sponsoring legislation which would allow up to \$4 billion a year in tax-free conservation easements.

Grant Available!

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service Request for Applications (RFA): Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged

Farmers and Ranchers Competitive Grants Program (OASDFR).

This program provides outreach and technical assistance to encourage and assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to own and operate farms and ranches and to participate in agricultural programs.

Appropriations for this program from fiscal years (FYs) 2002 and 2003 will be combined to support projects submitted in response to this Request for

Applications (RFA). The amount available for FY 2002 is approximately \$3,243,000.

The FY 2003 appropriations is not known at the time this notice is being published but is currently anticipated between 3 and 8 million dollars. Grants will be made for proposals found to be meritorious by a peer review panel to the extent that funds are available.

However, there is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular proposal or to make a specific number of awards.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on January 31, 2003 (5 p.m. Eastern Time).

Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Requests for Determination must be received by COB November 22, 2002.

ADDRESSES:

The address for hand-delivered applications, or applications submitted using an express mail or overnight courier service is:

Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Competitive Grants Program;
c/o Proposal Services Unit;
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service;
U.S. Department of Agriculture; Room 1420,
Waterfront Centre; 800 9th Street, SW.,
Washington, DC 20024; telephone: (202) 401-5048.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Dr. Elizabeth Tuckermanty, Program Director,
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service;

U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2241, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-2242; telephone: (202) 205-0241; fax: (202) 401-6488; e-mail: etuckermanty@reeusda.gov.